

City of Reading Human Relations Commission
February 12, 2020
MINUTES

Commissioners Present:

Karima (Karen) Archie
Lisa Blount
Kathryn Cobb-Holmes, Chair
Barbara Coffin
Valerie Phelps-Robinson
Richard Wagner
Zelda Yoder

Absent

Stacey Taylor

Staff

Kimberly Talbot

Guest

Councilwoman Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz
Rev. E. Morrison

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. The minutes were reviewed. The first line under old business of the minutes dated December 11, 2020. Commissioner Yoder moved as corrected. Commissioner Coffin seconded. Motion carried. The minutes were approved with corrections.

Executive Director's Report

The E.D. reports that our EEOC liaison wants to transfer cases to our office that were originally filed with the EEOC (approximately 10 cases to start).

We have been able to maintain a good referral system between the NAACP and the RHRC. The office has received 11 referrals with documentation. Three other individuals contact information was provided.

Lastly, there were 2 EEOC transfers and 1 in-house case. Two fair Housing cases were filed.

Old Business:

Commissioner Wagner requested information regarding the complaint Reading Pride was involved in that stemmed from the incident regarding the Pride flag.

Commissioner Yoder reports that new meeting rooms at the Reading public library are available for use. The ribbon cutting ceremony is Wednesday February 19, 2020 from 4-5 p.m.

Commissioner Yoder also reports that Reading Public Library has an event on March 6th "Cocktails & Classics" at the DoubleTree from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$75.00.

New Business

Commissioner Wagner reports that there will be a meet & greet the new board on March 31 at the Stirling Mansion. A suggested donation of \$5.00 is requested. The event is from 6 – 8:30 p.m. Reading Pride has also resurrected their newsletter. Commissioner Wagner provided his fellow Commissioners and the RHRC with a copy.

Councilwoman Cepeda-Freytiz reports that on February 26 at Mi Casa Su Casa from 5 – 7 p.m. there will be a meeting of social service agencies to discuss ways to collaborate with one another.

Public Comment:

Rev. Evelyn Morrison introduced herself to the Commission and provided information on her participation as a member of the Berks County Advisory Council and We the People.

Rev. Morrison is interested in partnering with the RHRC. Rev. Morrison reports that her group is a 501 C3.

Rev. Morrison reports that some employees of PHRC are suing and that the agency is experiencing a backlog of approximately 3 months. As a member of the Advisory Council, community member and non-profit, she is interested in working with RHRC to potentially train employers on a monthly basis.

Ms. Morrison believes that employees do not report things because they have been or have seen coworkers subjected to retaliation for doing so.

Rev Morrison reports that the D.O.J. is willing to come to Reading to address racial issues. She believes that with 2.5 employees the RHRC is unable to address the needs of our community. Rev. Morrison wanted the Commissioners to know that she made a request in September 2019 to allow members of We the People to volunteer in the RHRC so that would free up staff to do work. She reports that she has not had a response to that request.

Rev. Morrison reports that HUD just released funds and that can be used for education. Rev. Morrison suggested the RHRC apply for HUD grants to address employment issues. Rev. Morrison wanted the RHRC to request 1 million and partner with community agencies. Commissioners agreed that the RHRC was not in a position at this time to request that type of funding. Rev. Morrison feels that the Commission needs to think bigger.

Rev. Morrison reports that the Afro-Latino round table will occur in Reading this year. This session will be used to address systemic racism, address job placements of minority candidates and to recruit/train people of color instead of filling a lawsuit. Term limits are on the ballot

Rev. Morrison requested from the RHRC:

-develop more trainings for agencies/employers

-do more mediations

-provide sensitivity training

-review enforcement and compliance on a consistent basis.

Training and Conferences:

None scheduled at this time.

Next meeting scheduled for March 12, 2020